

GUIDE

Official Publication of
Paulist Institute for Religious Research

DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART AND CATECHETICS

Sister M. Virgine, M.H.S.H.

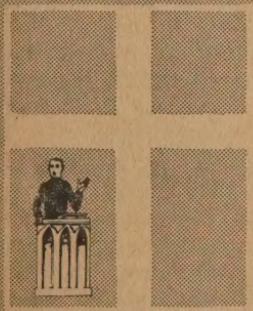
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David G. Russell

THE NEED FOR FOLLOW-UP

Frederick B. Chappell

MAY 1962, No. 168



INDIANAPOLIS 4 IND
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Religion in America

Is our nation Christian? Was it predominantly Christian at its birth? Are our churches secularistic? What is the significance of integration? What does religious dialogue promise? These are only a few of the questions discussed frankly in *From State Church to Pluralism: A Protestant Interpretation of Religion in American History*. (Doubleday Anchor Paperback.)

The book represents the informed, challenging opinions of Franklin Hamlin Littell who is professor of church history at Southern Methodist University. His doctorates from both Yale and the University of Marburg, and numerous articles on these topics in German and English language professional journals, have won him respected attention. He is also consultant to the National Council of Christians and Jews.

This stimulating analysis of the history of religion in our country and the lessons it teaches is that of a Protestant. But little imagination is required to see how this view has much to teach the American Catholic.

Dr. Littell reports, contrary to popular legend, that post-colonial America was "overwhelmingly unchurched and heathen, regardless of pretensions and public claims."

He freely grants that church membership and attendance at worship has improved remarkably in recent years. But he seriously questions the "quality" of much of this return to religion. "In a secular society," he asserts, "the churches are among the most secularized institutions."

The writer will certainly stir some rethinking and discussion by his views on the famous "wall of separation between Church and State." What we had, in fact, was a kind of unofficial or social "establishment" of Protestantism.

A Catholic can share with him his hope that by prayer and the dialogue, "it may even come to pass that the God whose purposes brood over the future will point out to our children or children's children some better way than the well-worn paths of denominational separation and suspicion which their fathers knew so well."

JOHN T. McGINN, C.S.P.

GUIDE, NO. 168, May, 1962.

Published 10 times a year (monthly except June-July, August-September when bi-monthly) by The Missionary Society of St. Paul the Apostle in the State of New York, 411 West 59th Street, New York 19, N. Y. Second class postage paid at New York, N. Y. Rates 1 year, \$1.00; 10¢ a copy; 5¢ a copy in bulk to Seminarians.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart and Catechetics

By Sister M. Virgine, M.H.S.H.

The encyclical letter "Haurietis Aquas" induced many to take a second look at devotion to the Sacred Heart. Writers have explored its theological, scriptural, and liturgical depths as well as its ascetic appeal to the youth of today. Pius XII called this devotion "the compendium of the whole mystery of our Redemption." What place does devotion to the Sacred Heart have in Christian formation? A glance at contemporary thought in catechetics will indicate this.

The modern approach to catechetics is a synthetic one—a synthesis whose unifying core retains its force in revealing the panoramic whole of God's dealings with man. This synthesis is not constituted by a set of formulae, a supernaturalized multiplication table to be mastered by memory. It is not an accretion of concepts to be microscoped by the understanding. Neither is it a sacred biography of the Son Incarnate with His actions historically set in time and place. This synthesis reveals the history of a Lover calling His beloved and expecting an answer. It is a Person-to-person call perpetuated by divine initiative, a single theme prismed through all ages and places in the actions of God pursuing His people. This view of doctrine is old and new. It is old in that it reveals the method God has always used to give Himself to man, and new, as a freshly-plucked fruit of the awakened interest over the past sixty years in scripture, liturgy, and patristic studies.

One element in this synthesis is its personal character. God makes Himself known as a living Person and not merely as an unnamed Lawgiver, or an exacting Supreme being who demands His just due. He is one who made man because He loves him and wants love returned. He is the Lord who makes us aware of His personal presence by using concrete images, events, and sensible signs. Through these He calls Him-

self the creatures of His making—a revealing, saving, communicating action.

The Creator graciously adapts Himself to the learning process and milieu of His creatures. He employs particular, concrete realities, examples such as images, symbols, and historical events, to express divine mysteries. Infinite Love becomes a Father to His son, a forgiving Spouse to His unfaithful wife, a protecting Cloud and Pillar of Fire for His harassed people. He freely pledges covenanted love after performing the saving deeds of the Exodus.

Another element in the doctrinal synthesis shows divine action continued in time. The signs of the Old Testament were "sacraments" of the moment, effective at a specific time. More than this, however, as part of God's progressively unfolding plan of Redemption, they point Christward to the perfect accomplishment of God's design for man. They lead to the perfect Sign, Christ, who was sent to reveal the Father to man, to inaugurate the Kingdom, to take man with Him in His return to the Father. This Christ did above all by His saving act of the cross. The Word Incarnate is the Mediator, the one who with the Father loves man and with man loves the Father. His theandric actions reconciled wayward sons with their forgiving Father. Through the Holy Spirit Christ's saving actions are continued through time in His Body the Church. The liturgy, the worship of the Church, perpetuates—especially in the Eucharistic celebration—this sanctifying cycle: *a Patre, per Filium eius Iesum Christum, in Spiritu Sancto, ad Patrem*.

This, the unifying theme of catechesis—the love of a personal God calling to Himself His people—is manifested concretely in time

Courtesy of *The Catholic Educational Review*, Washington 17, D. C. (Issue of October, 1961). Sister Virgine is a lecturer in the Department of Religious Education at the Catholic University of America.

through saving signs and perfectly accomplished in Christ the Redeemer. It is divine action recorded in scripture and continued in the liturgy.

This is the message or good news of salvation to be conveyed to man. It is a Person-to-person call requiring an answer. The answer, in turn, takes its cue from the method of the Caller and the nature of His message. God seeks a meeting and union of persons: divine and human. This is the message. His method conforms to the psychology of His students who as corporeal beings come to know by means of concrete, material sense data.

The message is voiced in signs that communicate to the whole personality an experience defying mere verbal expression—and the greatest of these is the death-life journey of the Redeemer. This, then, is God's message and God's method: personal communication through signs. The answer likewise springs from the total being. It is a Yes that is given by the whole person who freely accepts God's love on His terms and lives by it. It is a nod not only of the head but of the heart; faith producing an assent again expressed in symbol as the called ones unite in community to celebrate through sign the mystery of Christ's saving action and to live this faith in the concrete moments of time.

ESSENCE OF THE MESSAGE

Present-day catechetics proposes this as the unchanging essence of the message of salvation. What place does devotion to the Sacred Heart as given in the encyclical "Haurietis Aquas" have in this perspective?

The cult of the Sacred Heart "amounts to nothing else than the cult of the divine and human love of the Word made flesh, and of that love wherewith the Father and the Holy Spirit pursue sinful men." The love of a personal God is the first element of the doctrinal synthesis given above. God makes himself known as a living person . . . not merely an exacting supreme being who demands his just due . . . one who loves man. The encyclical expresses this thought in noting that Moses and the prophets described all relationship which existed between God and His own nation in terms of love and "not in the forbidding language they might have borrowed from God's supreme Lordship and from service in fear and

trembling that we all owe him." In referring to the Covenant, the author points out that this pact was not only forged by the bonds of God's supreme lordship and man's proper obedience, but also strengthened and nourished by the higher motive of love. Love is the object of the devotion, a love that we should adore, a sign of that divine love which Christ shares with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Catechists attend to the fact that God employs particular, concrete realities, such as images, symbols, and historical events, to express divine mysteries. God's task is to communicate the Infinite via the finite, to give divine mysteries that cannot be contained in mere verbal concepts to man who cannot experience them through mere verbal concepts. God communicates through symbols that contain rational, imaginative, emotional and sensitive elements, which appeal to the whole personality. Father Vann discusses the need for such vehicles when he refers to the use of "innate" and universal symbols:

"We cannot express the Inexpressible in concepts, in words; we cannot confine the Infinite Unknowable in concepts or words . . . sooner or later we find ourselves brought up short against a wall of mystery. Beyond this wall we cannot be led by the language of theological or doctrinal formulas . . . but we . . . can be led further in another way . . . the way of picture language."

The concrete, physical, pierced Heart of Christ, itself a symbol of love, points to the life-through-death journey of a divine being redeeming those who rejected Him. Its worship rests on the acknowledged principle that His Heart, the noblest part of His nature, is united hypostatically to the Person of the Word of God; and therefore we render to it the same worship of supreme adoration the Church honors the Person of the Incarnate Son of God Himself. The Heart in itself is adorable "but the movement of our souls toward an image, precisely as an image, does not stop in the image, but continues toward that thing whose image it is." This Heart symbolizes the love of personal God.

Throughout the encyclical reference is often made to the Heart of Christ as a symbol: a representation which surpasses

all others in efficacy and meaning; the obvious and expressive symbol of that inexhaustible charity toward men wherewith the Divine Redeemer is still on fire; the lawful symbol of that boundless charity which moved our Savior to shed His Blood and so enter into mystical marriage with the Church; the Heart of Jesus, more than all the other members of His Body, the natural pointer to, or symbol of His boundless charity toward mankind; principal token and sign of that threefold love wherewith the Divine Redeemer ceaselessly loves both His eternal Father and all mankind.

The Divine Catechist thus uses a material, physical heart—itself a symbol of love—to point to the Ineffable Trinitarian love that impelled the God-man to undergo the symbolic event of the life-through-death journey effecting the rebirth of mankind.

Another element in the doctrinal synthesis of modern catechetics shows divine action continued in time. The saving events of the Old Testament, significant in their historical setting, point Christward to the perfect accomplishment of God's design for men. Pius XII calls attention to the roots of this devotion when he says: "The faithful must go right back to Sacred Scripture, to Christian Tradition and to the deep limpid waters of the Sacred Liturgy, if they wish to understand the true nature of devotion to the Sacred Heart." Noting carefully that nowhere in scripture is there clear mention of any veneration or love for the physical Heart of the Word Incarnate, considered precisely as the symbol for His ardent charity, the Pontiff declared that this is no reason for doubting that charity of God toward us is the primary motive of the cult of the Sacred Heart.

"Both in the Old Testament and in the New it is preached and inculcated by means of images calculated vehemently to move our hearts. And when these images occur in contexts prophetic of the coming of the Son of God made Man, then may we consider them as a heralding of that noblest of all pointers or signs of God's love, namely the Sacred and Adorable Heart of the Divine Redeemer."

The author of the encyclical then refers to the images and events of the Old Testament God used to describe His love: covenant, love of father and son, husband and

wife, eagle protecting its young, canticle of canticles. "This love was . . . but a harbinger of that burning charity which the Redeemer, promised to men, was to pour out upon all from his love-filled heart."

The doctrinal synthesis points to the function of the Old Testament signs as one of leading to the perfect sign, Christ, Who was sent to take man with Him in His return to the Father. This Christ did above all by His saving act of the cross . . . the Mediator . . . Whose actions are recorded in Scripture and continued in the liturgy. "Haurietis Aquas" begins with a reference to the treasures flowing from the pierced Heart as foretold in Isaiahs 12, 3: "You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountain"; and with Christ's invitation to do so, as found in John 7, 37-38: "Let him come to me and drink, he who believes in me. As the Scripture says: 'From within his heart there shall flow rivers of living waters.'" These texts and their fulfillment by means of the piercing of the Heart on Calvary, related in John 19, 34: "One of the soldiers thrust a lance into his side, and blood and water immediately flowed out," are given as major texts for the devotion to the Sacred Heart. Pius XII adds that whatever is written of the side of Christ wounded and laid open by the soldier, is also applicable to His Heart which the lance's thrust certainly reached.

In speaking of the solid foundation upon which the cult of the Sacred Heart is built the Pontiff stated:

If only the fundamental elements of this form of piety are seen in that clear light which comes from Scripture and from Tradition, Christians will be better able to "draw waters in joy from the Saviour's fountains"; that is to say, to realize the altogether special importance of the cult of the Heart of Jesus in the Liturgy of the Church, in her spiritual life and in her external apostolate.

It is within this account of the piercing of Jesus' side—when the prophecy about the streams of living water was being fulfilled—that the mystery of the Sacred Heart was linked to the Paschal mystery. Today in the preparation and celebration of the Passover the Church recalls to us these texts and ceremonies which give rise to the Sacred Heart Devotion, thus joining it with

the Paschal mystery which gives it meaning. For this reason, Father Leclercq holds that we have no grounds for countenancing any opposition between it and the liturgy.

The pierced Heart is a visible expression of love—love of Christ obedient to His Father, love of the Father and Son for fallen mankind. It is a concrete manifestation of the Mediator's passing from death to life to redeem man and return with him to the Father, "a mystical Jacob's ladder by which we climb up to the embrace of God our Saviour." The pierced Heart of Christ expresses that love continued in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the Church, and the sacraments. As Father Leclercq says:

And so from the wounded Heart of the Redeemer was born the Church, as the dispenser of the Blood of our Redemption; and from the same Heart flows in copious abundance the grace of the Sacraments, from which the Church's children drink supernal life, as we say in the sacred Liturgy: "From riven Heart is born the Church, espoused to Christ." And, "who from out His Heart pours grace."

The message of salvation is a person-to-person call requiring an answer . . . a Yes given by the whole person who freely accepts God's love . . . a faith producing an assent again expressed in symbol as the called ones unite in community to celebrate through sign the mystery of Christ's saving action. For Pius XII the principal idea of this cult or devotion is that we should ourselves make a return of love to the divine Love. The return of love is best expressed in celebrating the mystery of the Redemption, the Mass. The Heart was pierced in the sacrificial act whereby Christ died that we might have life. Love for love is returned when that saving mystery is actualized today by the redeemed gathered together in community. The Mass, then, leads to devotion to the Sacred Heart and devotion to the Sacred Heart finds in the Mass its most adequate expression.

Our first duty toward the glorious Heart of the Lord is not reparation, but adoration of redeeming love and consecration—that is the gift of self, the response to this love. It is a gift not in the sense of a sympathetic wish to console, but rather the generous unselfish willingness to accept the law of Christ's life, which is the law of voluntary

self-sacrifice. The fellowship in suffering attained in the brutal routine of everyday life is the most genuine and perfect imitation of Christ and claims the whole man. This spirit of voluntary self-sacrifice does not exclude the notions of reparation and consecration but purifies them of the sentimental accretion acquired in time. The glorified Heart of Christ can suffer no more, but the Mediator permits man, the viator, to follow in His death-life journey heavenward. Our Mediator has atoned for our sins to the Father, but He wishes us to have a share in His expiatory sufferings—the fate reserved for His love in the world.

Pius XII does not consider the external practices of piety or the blessings promised in private revelation the most important thing. These blessings were promised that men might fulfill more fervently the principal duties of their faith, love and expiation, to the more effective enrichment of their own spiritual life. The author refers the wonderful growth of this cult to the fact that it accords perfectly with the very nature of the Christian religion. It did not arise as a result of a private revelation from God, neither did it appear suddenly in the Church. Rather it was a "natural flowering of that living faith and fervent piety by which men have been affected toward the adorable Redeemer and His glorious wounds which . . . bear witness to His immeasurable love."

This does not minimize the value of the private revelation or external practices of piety of this cult. The Holy Father notes that their importance lies in that Christ by displaying His Sacred Heart, willed to arouse the hearts of men to contemplate and adore the mystery of God's merciful love for the human race.

TO SUM UP

Devotion to the Sacred Heart, the "compendium of the whole mystery of Redemption," echoes the unifying core of the doctrinal synthesis of catechetics. The physical Heart of Christ channels the two-way current of love between Lover and beloved. This symbol offers a concrete reminder of God's salvific plan for men worked out in time: it recalls God's love as it revealed itself in Old Testament imagery, as it found adequate expression in the saving act of the Redeemer; it points to the daily re-enactment

of the mystery whereby the redeemed unite with their Mediator in passing from the death of sin to the new life of grace and in returning love for love; it recalls the birth of the Church and the conferring of the Spirit to dispense the sacraments—the rivers

of living waters flowing from the Saviour's fountain. The cult of the Sacred Heart provides also external practices of piety to encourage men to live the Mass in the spirit of devotion to the Sacred Heart throughout the day. ■ ■ ■

Encounter in the Market Place

By David G. Russell

Every spring and fall, on Wednesday afternoon, members of the seminary Evidence Guild make various street-corners in the loop of Baltimore their pulpits. Needless to say, there is no dignified sanctuary or attentive congregation; there are, rather, humming cars and roaring buses (coughing forth clouds of smoke), shuffling feet, and distracted conversation. As crowds of people gush forth at the sign of blinking lights, the flow of people—no, rather bodies—anesthetized by a thousand signs and colors, come and go.

"Today my good people, I would like to tell you the Good News of your salvation," says a speaker.

"Baltimore Evening Sun, read all about it."

"And the Word was made flesh. . . ."

"Could you tell me if this bus. . . ."

"History is the dialogue of God and His people."

The Catholic Evidence Guild in 1961 has a different set of problems than did its founders in 1925. Perhaps even the name Evidence Guild is now a misnomer, for no longer does the Guild find the need to give evidence in the sense of proof. Seldom is there a sharp-shooter with a bag of questions: Why do Catholics worship Mary, or how can you prove from the Bible the existence of purgatory? The job of the Guild today is not so much to prove the faith as to tell the people that there is a faith, that there is a sin which called forth a Savior.

The incarnate enemy of the street-corner preacher, Baltimore, U. S. A., is not, therefore, a vehement opponent or heckler; it is worse than that. The Word of God is not even drowned out in hearts of people by bad will. There can be no spark when the

heart is frozen with indifference and apathy. St. Augustine could say that our hearts are restless until they rest in God. But today the preacher must first stir hearts and minds from the coma of lethargy so that there might be a restless search which could lead to God.

For this reason, street-preaching has revolutionized itself. The contemporary approach must pierce not the hardness, but the dullness of men's hearts. This can only be done by speaking the Word which has power of itself to melt, and to inform. Pius XII pointed out that the answer is to bring the Word of God to others "so that they will live by it . . . to transform them, not from without by some superficial activity, but from within, so that they too will begin to see . . . and to conceive the desire, at first hesitating, then more assured, of changing themselves, and of becoming in their turn, in their own surroundings, centers of Christian life." Clever answers and brilliant proofs have been replaced by the only weapon which has power of itself—the truth.

The street-corner preacher attempts to sow a seed, the kernel of a doctrine, which will ferment and grow into the search for God. The word has the efficacy to do this because it is the Word of God. God, the author of this message, thus transforms mere oratory into preaching. His Word is a catalyst which demands response, either assent or rejection. Men can be indifferent to man's proofs, but not to God's truth. The Word of God works salvation: *per evangelica dicta deleanatur nostra delicta*. What is more, the Word will endure for-

ever: "My words will not pass away." The Word has power, not as a sacrament, but in some way as a sacramental. It is a visible sign expressed in human words, but at the same time it conceals also an inner grace. The Word contains the message, and the message, which is Christ, is the Word. The Word enjoys the power of God.

Street-corner preaching demands faith from God's instruments of proclamation. The speaker seldom sees his message working as leaven. He does see, though, throngs of people with distant or scornful stares; the mistrust written on their faces comes not from opposition to the Word, but from suspicion of one who breaks out of an accepted cultural pattern of lethargy, of one who has conviction enough to be a witness to his faith. But the zeal which is the source of suspicion can be at the same time a source of faith. Lurking behind the scorn is admiration for anyone who will be a living witness at the cost of humiliation.

INSTRUMENT OF THE WORD

Of course, the street corner preacher is overjoyed at the opportunity to be just such a witness to Christ, the Word. It is in fact, part of his vocation as a Christian to be an instrument of transmission. As St. John Chrysostom insistently reminds his hearers, it is the Christian community's duty to pass on the Word, "each to take his part in my own ministry as bishop." St. Paul points out this same facet of the Christian vocation when he writes the people of Colossae: "Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer every one" (Col. 4:5-6). The street-corner preacher tries to be a Christian well-versed in the truth so that he can be an adequate instrument of the Word, so that he can answer the questions of outsiders.

To be intimately associated with Christ in the mission of communication bestows dignity on the street-preacher because of his instrumentality. In fact, Augustine Rock, O.P., says that "a man is more of an instrument in God's hands as a preacher than he is as a minister of the sacraments." It makes little difference whether a new hammer from the hardware store or the heel

of a shoe is used to drive in a nail; both are capable of the job. It takes delicate and precision instruments to make fine Swiss watches or to cut diamonds, but whether the instrument is as crude as an old shoe or as fine as a diamond-cutter, both are worthless of themselves. But, as tools in the hands of the craftsman, the precision tools are more glorious as instruments because with them he can perform his work more perfectly. The same is true of the preacher. More natural qualifications are required from the preacher than from the sacramental minister. It is a privileged blessing, then, to be an instrument of the Word, to communicate the divine by preaching.

Wednesday afternoon street-preachers rejoice at the opportunity not only to be God's instruments, but also to be of service to their neighbor, the man on the street. In fact, preaching is a work of the active life which we can call a work of mercy because it ministers to our neighbor's needs. Without question, the indifferent passer-by has need of the Word, even though he does not know his own needs. Preaching, as a spiritual work, thus springs from the greatest virtue which relates to our neighbor. As St. Thomas points out (S. T., II-II, q. 30, art. 4), "Of all the virtues which relate to our neighbor, mercy is the greatest, even as its act surpasses all others, since it belongs to one who is higher and better to supply the defect of another, so far as the latter is deficient."

FRUITFUL SEED

This may sound very scholastic, and perhaps dry. The impelling motives behind the street-preacher, however, are profoundly existential. Only after one has stood on the stand and tried to preach to the distracted and oppressed people before him, only after he has experienced the truth falling on dull hearts, is he able to appreciate how desperately these men in the market place need the Word of God. Christ came to minister to the sick. The man in the street is dying. Christ needs men to prolong His work in time, to be His instruments, to preach the Word of God. Street-corner preaching offers itself to God; it is the seed that only He can bring to harvest.

The Need For Follow-Up

By Frederick B. Chappell

I appreciate the honor and opportunity that you have given me as a Catholic layman to give you my thoughts on why I think a planned follow-up for converts is important. The need for this was brought home clearly to me following my first Holy Communion and Confirmation. I am sure that my experience is typical of many converts who have received their instruction in a large city and then entered into the religious life of a small town parish. However, before describing my experiences to you, I feel that I must tell you something of my spiritual life prior to the day that I came to Monsignor McManus seeking guidance on how I might become a Catholic. I believe that this is important in helping to appreciate the degree of grace that I reached on my Confirmation.

I was raised in a strict Methodist family and our religious life was closely adhered to. However, looking back on it I realize now that it did not give me sufficient spiritual strength to sustain me in later life. This became evident as soon as I left the family circle to first go away to school, later to the army in World War II, and then into business. My interest in religious affairs dwindled with the passing years until I reached a point where unknowingly I could have been described as an atheist.

It was at this low level in my spiritual life that I met and married my wife, a Catholic convert herself. Out of curiosity I started going to Mass with her, at first irregularly, and then as my interest awoke, every Sunday. The beautiful liturgy of the Mass drew me and I found a peace of mind that I had never experienced before. I then found that I made use of every opportunity to discuss with my Catholic friends the history and teachings of the Church. This awakening and searching extended over a period of about eleven years, but it really wasn't until the death of my mother that I felt that all bonds with the past were broken and I was free to fill my desire to become a Catholic.

It is difficult to describe the growth of grace within me during my weeks of instruction, culminating in the never-to-be-

forgotten moments of first Holy Communion. I think we converts are fortunate in the fact that we are able to experience with all of our mature powers these great religious moments. However, it is this same maturity and realization of grace that can make the months following Confirmation a difficult period for the convert. In my own case the pinnacle was sustained for sometime.

However, as the weeks went by I found disturbing questions arising that went unanswered and a yearning to know more about my Church which I was unable to fulfill. If there had been more positive action on my part in making myself known to the parish priests or vice versa, I am certain that this difficult period for me could have been avoided. I tried to get the answers to my questions in the confessional and fulfill my desire for more knowledge of Church history by reading selections of my own choice. In neither case was I satisfied, first because the priest in the confessional felt that my questions were such that I should be able to answer them myself and secondly, although my choice of reading material was good it was the kind that required discussion.

If there had been a positive follow-up for converts or adult instruction class given in my parish I am sure that I never would have found myself floundering and uncertain within such a short period of being accepted as a soldier of the Church. The fact of the matter is, however, that even though my wife made it known to one of the priests that I was a recent convert and I did the same indirectly by joining the Holy Name Society and working on the Cardinal's Campaign Fund, we never received a visit or call from the parish. As far as educational activity is concerned there is only an hour's period every Monday for the public high school children.

The convert's problems during the first year or two after Confirmation are not so

A paper delivered at the Third National Conference on Convert Work, St. Joseph's Seminary, Yonkers, N. Y. (June, 1961). Sponsored by the Paulist Institute for Religious Research and the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. Mr. Chappell is associated with Bristol-Myers Corporation.

much a matter of doctrine but more a matter of practice and detail insofar as customs and the ritual of the Church are concerned. Many of the questions concerning these could be answered by the priest of the local parish providing the convert has received a full and proper welcome into the local Catholic community. If this has not been the case, small matters can grow out of proportion in the convert's mind. I think that I can best illustrate this by giving examples of some personal experiences that occurred to me within six to eight months after my Confirmation.

Let's take the simple matter of confession, particularly from the standpoint of how often this sacrament should be received. I had learned that if no mortal sins were committed a confession once a year would suffice. My personal inclination, from the satisfaction that it gave me, was to go to confession each time I received Communion no matter how short a time had elapsed. My difficulty in doing this came when I tried to think of some mortal sin that I might have committed and I usually ended up by confessing one that I was not certain I had done. The time finally came when I admitted to the priest that I was sure that I had not committed any mortal sins but just wanted to receive his absolution. It was then I learned that I could confess any sin that I might have committed during my life.

Two other matters came up that troubled me with regard to confession. First, I began to wonder if I should trouble the priest when I didn't have mortal sins to confess. This problem I discussed with some of my Catholic friends and I got answers at opposite poles. Some confirmed my suspicion that I shouldn't trouble the priest when I didn't have any mortal sins to confess. Others said that they shared my desire to receive absolution prior to communion, and since this suited my feelings I naturally went along with the opinion of this group. The other problem that arose concerned the guidance that I expected from the priest after confessing and describing in detail a sin which I had committed. I had hoped for advice that would help me to avoid sins in the future, but it was nearly eight months before I found a priest who listened to my problem intently and gave me the counsel that I was seeking.

Other factors that can be disturbing to a convert are the lives and morals of the

Catholics that surround him in every day life both at home and in business. Again I must turn to examples that have touched my own personal life. There are two couples that I know intimately. One couple are born Catholics who have been divorced and both have remarried. Despite their marital status, they do lead Christian lives in other respects. The other receive the graces of Catholic marriage yet their Mass attendance is irregular and their children are rude and disobedient. One couple can receive rich grace while the former is excommunicated. I now understand this difference, but it once perplexed me.

Very often my wife and I attend parties where a priest is invited and in many cases is a good personal friend of the host and other guests. As the evening wears on we find that some of the guests seem to take a curious delight in making the priest and the Church the butt of their jokes. This to me is offensive and in very poor taste and I can't understand the motive behind it.

VARIED PRACTICE

Because of the nature of my job, I do a considerable amount of traveling in Latin America, and in these countries I have seen a Catholicism that seems far removed from the religion that I have been taught. It appears that the Catholics in these lands sometimes practice a religion of superstition and a type of mortification that is different from ours. Further, it seems that when I attend Mass the men are noticeably absent and the few that are present stand at the back of the church. Why should this difference exist?

In addition to these personal matters that have come up from time to time and that I would like to discuss with a priest, there are day-to-day questions that arise in the convert's mind which I'm sure are routine to the born Catholic. For instance, a good friend across the street dies. Do you send flowers or is something else preferred? You find out that a Mass card would be appreciated. It is too embarrassing to admit that you don't know how to arrange for such a card, but whom do you turn to for the answer? You want to join the Holy Name Society, but you find that none of your Catholic friends are active members. Whom do you see about becoming a member? Envelopes are passed out for monthly and

special collections. Is there an obligation to use these or is it sufficient to put in the basket the amount you would have contributed in any event? When you go to a wake what do you do? Do you stand at the side of the bier and say a prayer? Do you kneel and say a prayer? Do you give your sympathies to the family first? These and many other matters arise that beg for an answer that is not always easy to find unless the convert has been properly welcomed into the local parish.

All of the foregoing point to the fact that probably more than anything else the convert wants to enter fully into the spiritual and social life of the local parish. Converts are full of a tremendous sense of grace that they first of all want to sustain and secondly share with those about them. The sustenance, in my opinion, should come from the priests of the parish and the sharing with the fellow Catholics in the community. I think many of us find that we are rebuked when we try to share our grace, not in a cruel way but with boredom. I have had several of my Catholic friends tell me that "you converts are all alike, you take your religion too seriously."

I have discussed with a couple of receptive Catholic friends the void into which I dropped after entering the local parish, and I have also told them of the opportunity that I was to have today to discuss ways of filling this void. Primarily this concerns a more active and positive follow-up for converts. As a result we agree on one or two suggestions which may be of value.

We think that it is of primary importance that the local parish be advised by formal

notice of the arrival of a convert into the parish. This would alert the parish priest and start what could be a routine but most welcome acknowledgment of the presence of new members in the community. For instance, the follow-up might start with a telephone call from the priest and then a visit from the president or some other officer of the parish men's or women's society. We believe the latter individuals should enter into the picture in any event to describe the parish social and lay activities and suggest areas where the convert could join in.

After this initial welcome we think the follow-up should take the form of an open discussion group. Even an hour a week would be helpful in giving the convert the chance to meet with other Catholics under the guidance of a priest to settle problems and questions such as I have outlined previously.

Besides increasing the convert's knowledge of the Church, it would be a time for him to help share his own faith as he grows in it by talking over his own and others' problems. It seems to us that this type of discussion group would be a good answer to the convert's desire to feel that he belongs in harmony with the other Catholic members of his community.

In closing, I think that it is logical to assume that most converts go through a period of adjustment after their entrance into the Church and that there are questions that arise that they cannot answer without assistance. It therefore seems that every opportunity should be given the convert to find security within his own parish both socially and spiritually.

OLD AND NEW

To enable him to give guidance to the faithful in these turbulent days the priest himself must first be sure of the road. By and large there appears to be two sections in the clergy. There are priests who, without much critical sense, welcome anything that is called novel. Others keep, *a priori*, all this novelty at arm's length. Neither of these attitudes would seem to be the correct one. In these matters we should, I think, adhere to the well-known saying of St. Paul: *Omnia probate, quod bonum est tenete*. We should scrutinize all, the old and the new, and retain what is good of both old and new. If we wish to find the right way, prudence and common sense urge us to use our critical sense regarding both the old and the new. In other words we should avoid being one-sided in our attitude and consider the disputed matter under all its aspects.

Irish Theological Quarterly.

DOCTRINE IN PERSPECTIVE

Every theologian will admit (that) through the struggles with heresy Catholic doctrine loses something of its harmonious proportions, as we have to insist on one truth almost to the exclusion of others in our defensive work. Heresies are generally the denial of one specific doctrine, and the Catholic doctor in defense of the endangered dogma has almost to neglect everything else in order to give his full attention to the position that is in peril.

A good deal of Catholic theology, though always true and most orthodox, is not always seen in its due proportions, just as in war the hasty and irregular trenches that are thrown up to shelter the bodies of the men who defend their country are, for the time being, of greater importance than ancient cities far back in the rear. (Abbot Vonier, *The New and Eternal Covenant*, p. 3.)

READING I'VE LIKED

It was a blessed inspiration of Father J. Giblet, with the aid of ten other scholars, to give us this excellent book on the great themes of Scripture. The Covenant, God's People, The Exodus, Conversion—these and the principal realities of Salvation History are lucidly explained in the context of the Old Testament, their fulfillment in Christ, our present Christian obligation and the glorious finale to which God calls us. *The God of Israel, the God of Christians*; edited by J. Giblet. Desclée, \$8.95.

The name Godfrey Diekmann, O.S.B., is highly respected among those dedicated to the liturgical revival. His papers at the various National Liturgical Weeks have been outstanding in relating theology to the daily life of Christians. *Come, Let us Worship*, (Helicon, \$4.50) contains 14 of these papers which no American preacher or catechist can afford to miss.

The busy teacher of religion (and preacher) will be grateful to Canon C. Emmett Carter for systematizing and for giving us an orderly textbook on the best ideals and methods sponsored by the new catechetics for the North American scene. *The Modern Challenge to Religious Education*. (William Sadlier.)

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GUIDE

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Guide Lights

SUMMER SESSIONS . . .

• The Preachers Institute meets at St. Francis College, Loretto, Pa., June 25-July 20. Rev. Sebastian Miklas, O.F.M.Cap., and Father Liske, author of "Effective Speaking," head the staff. Registration office: The Preachers Institute, Box 1305, the Catholic University of America, Washington 17, D. C.

• The Mid-Western Institute of Pastoral Theology will hold sessions on "Pastoral Counselling," Aug. 26-29, at Sacred Heart Seminary, 2701 Chicago Blvd., Detroit, Mich. Write to the Institute at the seminary for complete information on what promises to be a most rewarding program.

• The Summer Biblical Institute for Priests gathers at St. Mary's Junior College, Chicago, Ill., July 2-6 and July 9-13. Topics this year will discuss Revelation and the historical circumstances relating to its presentation by some of the leading Scripture scholars of America. For information and registration: Committee of the Summer Biblical Institute for Priests, 21 West Superior St., Chicago 10.

• The annual convention of The Catholic Theological Society of America convenes June 25-28, at Pittsburgh, Pa. The Hotel Penn-Sheraton.

• The Summer Session at the Catholic University of America offer attractive courses specially interesting to priests and seminarists in Religious Education, Pastoral Counseling and for Latin Mission Personnel. Write to the Director of the Summer Session, Catholic University of America, Washington 17, D. C.

• Seminarians' Catholic Action Study of the South holds its 14th annual conference August 27-30. The place: St. Joseph's Abbey, St. Benedict, La. For information and reservations write Francis George, O.M.I., chairman SCASS, Our Lady of the Snows Scholasticate, Pass Christian, Miss.

THE COMING COUNCIL . . .

The Holy Father spoke at a semipublic consistory at which the new Cardinals took their places for the first time and he told them that their new dignity "assumed in this year's consistory a character of special reference to the Second Vatican Council." Citing the council as an assembly of "the successors of the Apostles, coming from every region where the Church extends her shadow," the Pope told the new Cardinals that "it is enough to consider your places of origin to realize this heartening reality." The Cardi-

nals come from several countries and five of them belong to religious orders. The Pope said that this "universality of this Cardinalatial elevation is a harmonious prelude to the universality of the great council."

A LUTHERAN LINK . . .

Another harmonious note was sounded by an announcement from the Evangelical (Lutheran) Church of Germany. It appointed Edmund Schlink, professor at Heidelberg University, as a representative in Rome to study the projects and proposals drawn up for the council. Cardinal Augustin Bea, S.J., president of the Preparatory Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, welcomed the naming of Professor Schlink. He said that he would most willingly give to him every possible assistance. The professor's position will be similar to that of Canon Bernard Pawley, who is working as a liaison official between the Anglican Church and the Preparatory Secretariat.

CAMPAIGN IN CAMEROON . . .

There was a curious convocation in the new country of Cameroon for this same purpose of fostering Christian unity. This former French possession has a population of 3,300,000. 704,000 are Catholics, 93,000 are catechumens. 302,000 are Protestants, 1,000 are Orthodox. 605,000 are Moslems. Recently more than 3,000 Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox students met to study and pray for unity. The meeting ended with community recitation of the Our Father and a prayer asking for forgiveness for sins against Christian unity. "For all the times we have mocked the beliefs of others, their ceremonies, and their customs, have mercy on us, O Lord. We have sinned."

A GENEROUS GESTURE . . .

In Atlantic City several Protestant churches did not hurt the cause of unity when they offered their facilities for classroom use to Holy Spirit Church. The church school was severely damaged by the great storm which hit the South Jersey area early in March.

VETERUM SAPIENTIA . . .

Ever since the publication of the Apostolic constitution on the place of Latin in the Church, there has been considerable discussion of whether and how far it applies to the liturgy. There has been disagreement on whether the door has been left open for

continued efforts on behalf of the vernacular. Several liturgists feel that the door is open provided that such efforts do not involve any attempt to undermine the primacy of Latin. They declared that this injunction insofar as it affects the liturgy must be viewed in the context of the entire document and the document in the context of the Holy See's liturgical program of recent years. In the context of the document it is noted that there is only one reference to the liturgical use of Latin. And in the context of the liturgical program, the new document must be interpreted in the light of the Holy See's actions in recent years granting permission for increased use of the vernacular in many places.

DUTCH DECISION . . .

The Dutch have not been content to allow the matter to remain in the realm of opinion. A group of prominent Catholic priests and laymen there have asked the hierarchy to clarify the constitution. In a letter to the bishops they pointed out that the constitution has been interpreted by some commentators, especially in Rome, as barring any changes in the language of the liturgy. They said that although the actual wording of the constitution did not exclude the use of the vernacular, the impression had been created that it put a quietus to discussion.

"The value and authority of such initial reactions in Rome," they said, "have not so far been very clear. His Holiness Pope John XXIII does not even once mention the vernacular in his constitution, but speaks about the many merits of Latin, particularly for the Church, and therefore orders bishops and the supreme superiors of religious orders to see to it that 'none of their subjects, moved by an inordinate desire for novelty, writes against the use of Latin either in the teaching of the sacred disciplines or in the sacred rites of the liturgy.'"

The signers of the letter went on to ask the bishops "to do everything possible to clarify the position for Dutch Catholics" and to seek further elucidation when the Second Vatican Council convenes.

NOTICE FOR NON-CATHOLICS . . .

In 1960 and 1961 the Paulist Fathers experimented with retreats for those outside the Church. The experiments, according to Father Noyes, C.S.P., have warranted an expanded schedule of such retreats. They have proved especially helpful to those who have remained undecided after a course of instructions. They have also fostered a spirit of prayer and understanding. As a consequence three of these retreats are planned

for this year. The first is the weekend of June 29 to July 1 at the Dominican Retreat House, Elkins Park, Pa. (a suburb of Philadelphia); the second, the weekend of July 27 to 29 at the Dominican Retreat House, Schenectady 9, N. Y.; and the third the weekend of October 26 to 28, the Cenacle, Lake Ronkonkoma, Long Island, N. Y. To obtain further information or to make reservations, you are invited to write to these addresses.

DEPARTMENT OF STATISTICS . . .

A report of the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and Universities indicates that the number of priests is not keeping pace with the growth in Catholic population. The statistics were drawn from 39 nations which were not identified. It showed that in 1960 there was an increase in the Catholic population of these nations of more than 9.5 million over 1959. At the same time there was an increase of only 2,026 priests.

Another statistic which must be disquieting is afforded by the Church of England. In an official statement it claims that 3,801 Catholics joined its membership in 1958. The figure is not disputed by Catholic sources. Instead they offered as an explanation that most of the number were refugees from predominantly Catholic Hungary and Poland and were probably influenced by the kindness and sympathy they received from non-Catholic welfare organizations. They also suggested that a majority of those who became Anglicans had probably done so because of marriage problems.

JOHN J. KEATING, C.S.P.

TAPE RECORDINGS OF THE THIRD NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CONVERT WORK

All the major talks of the Third National Conference on Convert Work held at St. Joseph's Seminary, New York, are to be found on these tapes. Four tapes at a total cost of \$15.00.

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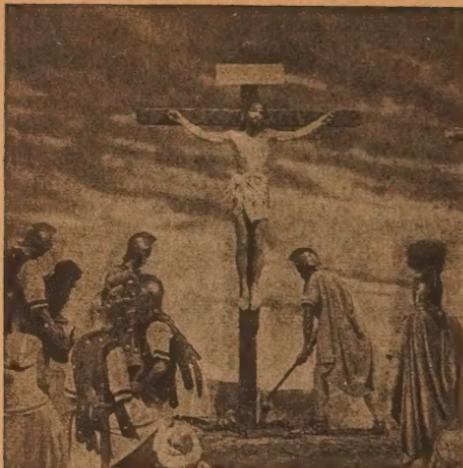
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